

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana News Releases, 1928,
1956-present

University Relations

2-22-1999

Exercises may help prevent carpal tunnel syndrome

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Exercises may help prevent carpal tunnel syndrome" (1999). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 15864.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/15864>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Relations at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.



The University of
Montana

UNIVERSITY RELATIONS • MISSOULA, MT 59812 • 406-243-2522 • FAX: 406-243-4520

NEWS TO USE

This release is available electronically on INN (News Net.)

Feb. 22, 1999

Contact: Gordon Opel, UM Wellness Center director, (406) 243-2027.

EXERCISES MAY HELP PREVENT CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

By Cary Shimek
University Relations

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a hand disorder resulting from repetitious, forceful motion of the hands and wrists. The malady is common among custodians, word processors and others who use the same hand motions over and over.

Gordon Opel, director of the Wellness Center at The University of Montana, says that 40 percent of the University's Workers' Compensation cases result from carpal tunnel syndrome and other repetitive motion problems. However, he says proper hand positioning in the workplace and some simple exercises may prevent the syndrome and possibly eliminate the need for corrective surgery.

The carpal tunnel is a body cavity in wrists through which nerves and tendons extend into the hand. Excess, repetitive strain causes tendons to swell and press on the main nerve in the hand, which can result in tingling, pain, numbness and dysfunction. Surgery, which normally requires six to eight weeks of recovery time, can correct the problem but may not be necessary with the proper hand positioning and exercise regimen.

Opel says people should strive to keep their elbows bent at 90 degrees in the workplace. To reduce pressure on tendons and nerves in the hand, wrists should be straight -- not sagging and not flexed laterally in a windshield wiper fashion. They also should use hand tools with the appropriate width, size and shape so that they can be gripped comfortably and absorb

-more-

vibration. Handles should be positioned to keep wrists and hands in alignment.

In addition, Opel says UM workers have had success reducing the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome with the following exercises:

Thumb stretch: With a hand placed before you, gently pull the thumb down and back with the other hand until you feel a stretch. Hold for five seconds. Repeat twice. Do this for each thumb.

Hand stretch: Make a fist and then extend your fingers as far apart as possible. Hold for about 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat the sequence five to 10 times until hands and fingers feel relaxed.

Thumb squeeze: Holding a flexible ball, such as an old tennis ball, press with your thumb toward the fingers, but don't press back with the fingers. Repeat the exercise 25 times with each thumb.

Finger squeeze: Place the ball in the palm of your hand and squeeze with all your fingers. Use a rolling action, as if making a fist. Relax the hand, and then repeat 25 times.

Stretching the entire body, arms, shoulders and neck also can improve carpal tunnel health by loosening muscles and boosting circulation.

These exercises can be performed at home or work and should not take longer than five to 10 minutes to complete. They are recommended by the National Safety Council for helping reduce the risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome. Regular physical exercise such as walking, maintaining a healthy weight and not smoking also will improve carpal tunnel health.

###